

Terra Skoglund's Vocation Story

Hi! My name is Terra, I grew up and was a parishioner at St. Patrick's until I moved to Colorado in 2014. I am a lay member of the Community of the Beatitudes, an Ecclesial Family of Consecrated Life (EFCL). An EFCL is an institute made up of both consecrated men and women and brings together different states of life: lay people and consecrated.

Since I was young I knew the Lord had a call for my life though it wasn't specific. The enduring call was that His love in my life was a gift and that he wanted me to share His love with others in my life. Simple enough, but how was he asking me to live this out in a particular way? I had to accept the unknown and live in what I knew to be true though I didn't see the specific end, which was a huge challenge. Throughout college I asked the Lord, "What is your call for my life? What's my vocation?" I had some amazing advice from a priest, "Don't force it, just get to know Jesus better." Annoyed by this advice because I thought I knew Jesus very well, I made efforts to pray more regularly and not think about my future and rather just be with Him and live my daily life. Then after trying not to think about it and detach from my desire to figure out my vocation, the Lord spoke in the silence while I was on a very long hike. "I'm calling you to be a lay missionary."

It was clear. Cool Lord! I was excited to have more direction but it still wasn't clear if it was called to be single or married. This call to love and be a lay missionary lead me to move to Colorado to study theology because I needed to be formed in Christ's teaching in the Church. While I was in school I met my community and in meeting them my heart was set on fire. I had no idea that there were communities where lay people and religious lived, prayed and shared a common life together. It was the scripture (Acts 2:42) incarnate and the response to the call was simple, he inflamed my heart with joy and peace, and all I needed to do was take the first step in formation, one at a time.

As a lay member of an EFCL, I could marry or take a private vow of "celibacy for the kingdom," we have both, as well as religious sisters and brothers in habits. I wear, "normal clothes," though

usually in brown and white, to symbolize the cross and resurrection and to be in communion with our religious brothers and sisters.

I never thought my life would look like it does. I didn't even know this type of life existed. It's so much better than I ever imagined. Following the Lord is simple like Jesus tells us over and over again, "My people hear my word and do it." Our very identity is tied to his invitation to follow him in his ways. Yet, we need to get to know his voice to be able to follow him. This comes in silent prayer, reading scripture and letting it touch our hearts. There have been many calls within my walk with the Lord, all have affirmed who he is and who I am. Yes, I hear the Lord through others and exterior means but when it comes to discernment, especially of the "big things" like vocation, I need to listen to him speaking at the depths of my heart and that requires a practice of silence.

What were some fears you had during your discernment process?

I have a million fears and doubts but these are the same for anything: making the "wrong choice," being misunderstood, fear of the negative gaze of others, my family thinking I don't love them/abandoning them,

What desires did you have for your vocation?

Just because of my personality I have a million desires so I'll give you the broad strokes: to not lose who I am, to love God to the maximum, to find a spouse who wants to live this same radical yet simple life together, to be missionary wherever I go, to be loved...

What advice do you have for a young person who isn't sure where God is calling them?

Do not worry. Be persistent in prayer and spending time in silence with the Lord and in His time (which is best for you) your next step towards your vocation will be clear.

There are 3 layers to vocation. First, the call to holiness—for all. Second, the specific state in life: consecrated, ordained, married, and single. Third, your missional call—pastor, cloistered, nurse, international missionary, etc. We are all, always, called to holiness but our state in life and our missional call can change. For example, St. Elizabeth Anne Seaton, was single, then

married, then widowed (single) then consecrated. I was working as a nurse, now I am an international missionary and I will come back to the US and be doing something else. The Lord is always at work! Don't be afraid of taking the wrong step, this is why there are periods for discernment, the Lord will make it known to you in the right time what steps you need to take. Trust Him.

Who/what experiences have helped you during your discernment process?

Having a spiritual director and mentors in the faith is huge. It's important that you trust those leading you in the spiritual life, if you don't trust them, you are wasting both of your time